

digital microwave media. Local call facility is not admissible between the two SDCAs under the existing rules.

(b) There is no delay in providing group dialling facilities in West Bengal Circle as most of the exchanges have been covered. The facility to remaining exchanges is being extended progressively on availability of equipment and transmission media.

#### Loss Suffered by Railways Due to Cyclone

861. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether during the period of cyclone and rains in the Andhra Pradesh during 1996, the major railway tracks and lines were affected;

(b) if so, the total loss suffered by the railways due to the cyclone and rains;

(c) whether all the railway lines that were damaged have been repaired by now; and

(d) if so, the total expenditure incurred thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) about Rs. 7.20 crore.

(c) All the damaged Lines have since been restored on temporary basis and permanent restoration work is in progress.

(d) Rs. 7.20 crore (approx.) have been incurred on temporary restoration work. Permanent restoration work would cost about Rs. 19.90 crore.

#### Closure of Unmanned Level Crossings

862. SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA :

SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Government have decided to close down a large number of unmanned/manned level crossings in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, zone-wise;

(c) whether the Government are considering to provide alternative roads before closing these level crossings;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b)	Railway	Number of level crossings
	1	2
	Central	46
	Eastern	19

1	2
Northern	85
North Eastern	93
Northeast Frontier	103
Southern	117
South Central	37
South Eastern	8
Western	28
Total	536

(c) Yes, Sir. Wherever necessary the level crossing will be closed after completion of required formalities.

(d) 65 level crossing roads will be passed through existing nearby bridge. 351 level crossings will be linked to nearby level crossings.

(e) 120 level crossings will be closed, since road traffic is either absent or very meagre which does not justify their continuance.

#### Fire in Bhopal-Bound Shatabdi Express

863. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether a fire broke out in Bhopal-Bound Shatabdi Express on January 18, 1997;

(b) if so, the main cause of the accident; and

(c) the measures taken by the Government to check such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A fire broke out in the under-frame of the generator-cum-luggage van of 2002 New Delhi-Bhopal Shatabdi Express at Ajhai station on New Delhi-Agra section of Central Railway on 18.1.1997. The incident of fire is being enquired into by the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Central Circle, whose findings are awaited.

(c) The following steps have been taken to prevent similar accidents :-

- (i) Proper maintenance of electric fittings in all passenger coaches is being ensured at the time of overhauling.
- (ii) Checks are carried out at maintenance depots to ensure proper electrical fittings and smooth working of the alarm chain apparatus in passenger carrying trains;
- (iii) Passengers are not allowed to carry inflammable materials on the trains;
- (iv) Portable fire extinguishers are provided in locomotives, brake-vans, AC coaches, pantry cars and the generator vans for prompt tackling of fire;

- (v) Staff is trained in fire-fighting techniques;
- (vi) Creating an awareness in the travelling public through various media, regarding dangers of carrying inflammable and explosive material on passenger carrying trains. Periodical checks are made on this aspect.

#### Necessary Powers to General Managers

864. SHRI AJOY MUKHOPADHYAY : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to give necessary powers to General Managers for procurement of coaches for smooth running of trains and fulfilling the minimum need of increasing the number of trains in their respective Zones and for that requisite financial powers be given to them;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No such proposal is presently under consideration of the Government.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Indian Railways' requirement of passenger coaches is largely met by Integral Coach Factory and Rail Coach Factory. Procurement of passenger vehicles and their deployment on various Zonal Railways is done by the Railway Board on a global basis and it is not considered desirable to authorise Zonal Railways to procure passenger coaches locally.

#### T.V. Transmitter Assam

865. DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) the number of High Power Transmitters, Low Power Transmitters and Very Low Power Transmitters installed in Assam during each of the last three years;

(b) whether the border districts of Assam are affected by propaganda by neighbouring countries through High Power Television and Radio Transmitters; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed to taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) whereas 4 Low Power Transmitters were installed during 1994-95 and 6 Low Power Transmitters and 1 Very Low Power Transmitter during 1995-96, no Transmitter has been installed during the current financial year.

(b) Although some parts of Assam do receive TV/ Radio signals from neighbouring countries, no report on propoganda by these countries has been received so far.

(c) All India Radio and Doordarshan Plans to strengthen coverage of border areas of Assam. With the completion of All India Radio projects presently under implementation, the radio coverage in the state of Assam will increase from the existing 83% to 99% by population. Doordarshan proposes to set up High Power Transmitters in Tazpur, Jorhat and Kokrajhar subject to availability of funds, infrastructural facilities and inter-se priorities.

#### Air Traffic Growth

866. SHRI ANANT GUDHE : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) the estimated air traffic growth in the country during the next three years-major airport-wise;

(b) the details of upgradation, expansion/modernisation plan proposed to meet the fast growing air traffic in the country;

(c) the details of investment involved in development of Air Traffic infrastructure in the country for the next three years; and

(d) the strategies and priorities worked out to strengthen and modernise the Air Infrastructure to handle fast growth in air traffic?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) During the next three years, it is expected that growth in International and Domestic passenger traffic would be 8% and 12.5% respectively.

(b) During the Ninth plan period, the following airports have been identified for upgradation :-

For limited international operations : Ahmedabad, Aurangabad, Amritsar, Bhubaneshwar, Calicut, Coimbatore, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Mangalore, Madurai and Varanasi.

For domestic operations : Agartala, Bagdogra (Civil Enclave), Bhopal, Bhuj (Civil Enclave), Bhavnagar, Dibrugarh, Gaya, Hassan, Imphal, Jabalpur, Jammu, Kanpur, Kargil, Lilabari, Porbandar, Port Blair (Civil Enclave), Raipur, Silchar (Civil Enclave), Tejpur (Civil Enclave), Tirupathi and Vijayawada.

In addition, upgradation of airports at Hubli and Belgaum and construction of new airports at Gulbarga and Cannanore are under consideration.

(c) and (d) Estimates of investments for development of air traffic infrastructure for the next three years are as follows :—

Year	Rs. in crores
1997-98	609.15
1998-99	666.37
1999-2000	753.29

Strengthening and modernising the air infrastructure is a continuous process.